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THE ADVANCEMENT OF ALTON, ILLINOIS

A GENERAL CITY PLAN STUDY FOR
The Board of Trade



CHARLES MULFORD ROBINSON
JANUARY, 1914

Please handle
this item carefully.
The age that makes
this item precious also
makes it very fragile.
May we preserve
history for those who
come after us that
they may be
inspired.

The Alton Board of Trade, ready to enter upon the third year of its work for Alton, old enough to have earned some victories, young enough to have courage to attempt the tasks still before it, strong in the support and confidence of its members, dedicates itself anew to this community.

It shall be our duty to so strive that the end of the year we now enter shall find our own city a better place in which to live;

—that its natural beauty shall be further developed for the enjoyment of all;

—that physical and moral community cleanliness shall be promoted;

—that the convenience and comfort of our citizens shall be our constant concern and the material prosperity of our people be increased in so far as we may be enabled to add to the industrial importance of the City.

The co-operation of every citizen from the humblest to the most powerful is vital to the fullest measure of success.

From the cleanliness of a back yard or an alley to the disposition of the City's sewage; from the planting of a tree to the bringing in of a big factory; from the single good word spoken to the published statement reaching thousands—each is a part of the work.

You can do something either great or small. But it remains undone, unless YOU do it.

Let us make our home town so attractive from within that it will be seen from without.

We pledge our aid and ask yours.

THE ALTON BOARD OF TRADE
BY ITS BOARD OF DIRECTORS.

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“As often stated, a city resembles a corporation, but an ordinary corporation can stop its growth, if its directors or stockholders determine that it shall do so. A municipal plant cannot be stopped.”



“Business prosperity depends upon the ability of a people to produce and earn, so that they may buy and pay. Business must have a human basis. The grade of a business depends upon the grade of its human background. To build up the humanity of a community is the surest way of building up the business of a community.”

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PART I.
THE GENERAL SURVEY.

INTRODUCTION

To the Board of Trade,
Alton, Illinois.

Gentlemen :—

You commissioned me to spend a week in Alton, for the purpose of securing data and impressions from which to prepare a City Plan Report. Necessarily, a report thus made must be general—even preliminary—in character.

Yet, there was reason to hope, you believed, that such a study of the city, and of the conditions which affect it—a study made from an unprejudiced standpoint and with wide experience back of it—would result in developing a helpfully definite conception of the city's probable destiny. If it did this, there would be afforded a basis upon which to formulate a municipal program. You would be able, on the strength of it, to determine what steps would best aid progress, and what retard it. You would be able to estimate local and immediate improvement projects from the broad point of view, so that in future development little would need to be undone. You would know the attitude of mind with which Altonians should face the future, and the degree of conservatism or of courage with which they should approach the problems of to-day.

Let us endeavor, then, in this study, to lift ourselves above the natural bias of neighborhood and, viewing the community as a whole, to gain the larger vision which is too often clouded in the press of the day's near duties. In the doing of these things we shall be coming close indeed to a real City Plan—we shall be attaining the only kind of city plan which it is possible in a week's time to formulate.

That plan must, it is true, be general. It can go into little detail. There has been no opportunity for those precise surveys, topographic, sociologic, and economic, upon which alone it is possible to build up an elaborate study. But it will, I hope, reach some of the big, salient facts; and it will endeavor to be suggestive of much. Thus, even though general, it must be worth while. It seems to me an appropriate thing, therefore, and a happy omen for Alton's future, that the Board of Trade is the body which commissions such a study. Later on, it

should not be difficult, when occasion requires, to take up the projects one by one and fill in the details.

A word or two further as to the plan to be thus evolved: In discussing it, I shall give conclusions without rehearsing in detail the conditions observed. Those factors, economic and mental as well as topographic or physical, are familiar to all of you. Moreover, the Alton of which I shall speak—and which the plan will contemplate—is not the Alton of to-day or of to-morrow or of next spring or summer, except as you may choose in certain particulars to make it so. It may not be the Alton of five or ten years hence. But it is the Alton which some day ought to be, and for which preparations should now be made. The proposed changes and the recommendations need not, therefore, frighten anybody.

GENERAL FACTORS.

Having said these things in introduction, let us face two or three facts which must go far toward moulding the Alton plan. Through a combination of such influential factors as exceptional transportation facilities, low freight rates, convenient markets, cheap power and abundant sites, a great industrial development may be anticipated. This has already gone so far as to be attracting attention. In the train of such development there must come rapid growth in population, taxing sanitary, transit and business facilities and demanding inexpensive housing.

Over against these requirements, we have to put, in the case of Alton, an old town built on a very irregular site and having an almost complete lack of the usual engineering data. There is no topographical survey of the city's site—made up though it is of steep hills, deep and irregular valleys, rolling tablelands, and precipitous bluffs. To learn the location of some existing sewers one must go to the private records of plumbers! The present city engineer is wisely doing what he can to correct this condition, filing and indexing the plats he makes.

PRELIMINARY RECOMMENDATIONS.

But obviously the first great need of Alton is a topographical survey. Until this has been secured and a contour map prepared, no detailed plans can be made except in the most piecemeal fashion; anything like a comprehensive scheme, worked out with accuracy, is an impossibility. A comparatively insignificant sum would provide this data in a year's time. In many ways it would save the city money.

The first and strongest recommendation that I have to make, therefore, is the authorization of such a map. With proper assistance, it could be made in the office of the city engineer. It will be convenient to prepare it on two sheets. On one will be shown the

location not only of streets and blocks, but of individual lots, of railroads, waterways, curbs, and city property. On the other sheet, having the same horizontal scale, may be marked the contours. By putting these on tracing cloth, from which prints are easily made, one can be put over the other. Additional sheets may be devoted to sewers, to pavements, to land values, etc., so making available a complete record.

The second recommendation, which is akin to the first, is that the city engineer be given sufficient and competent assistants. It ought to be realized that Alton presents unusually difficult engineering problems; that there is no part of the city administration which calls for a higher grade of expert service, or where mistakes may be more costly or more widely injurious. Alton is full of examples now that should impress this lesson strongly. It is sheer folly to talk of the bigger and better Alton until these two fundamental steps are taken.

THE PROBLEM DEFINED.

Granted this, we have next to consider the obligations which will be imposed by such large industrial growth as here anticipated. These obligations, being practically universal, can be foretold by observing other cities where growth of a like kind has taken place. They must form the basis of the city plan.

Generally, then, it is necessary to provide convenient shipping facilities near the industries; to make possible in proximity to the works a residence section for employees; to provide convenient transit facilities from the works to other residence sections, so that all the workers will not be compelled to live around the shops; to anticipate the need for parks and play space; to foresee a demand for a distinctly high class residence section, which will be comparatively far from the works; to consider the effect which these possibly conflicting influences will have on the retail—or "business"—section; to take into consideration the comfort of interurban travelers and to secure easy grades and sufficient width for arterial highways. In addition, in the local problem, we must seek to facilitate the wider use and enjoyment of the riverfront; we should plan that the new City Hall, since one is needed, should have a not less convenient location than has the present structure; and finally we should note those points in which deficiencies in the Alton of to-day would prove particularly serious as the city grows in numbers.

Because one development is dependent upon another, it will not be practicable to take up all these matters in the order given, nor always separately. But I shall try to touch upon every one.

The further discussion and suggestions will be grouped for convenience under the following headings: Railroads and River, The Street System, The Park System, Miscellaneous and Administrative.

PART II.

RAILROADS AND RIVER.

FREIGHT YARDS.

First, we may consider shipping facilities near the industries. The segregated industrial district is at the east end of town; most of the switching is done at the west end, where its proximity to the shopping district and its interference with the use of the riverfront make it particularly objectionable to the public; where, too, cramped quarters make expansion of the facilities almost impossible. Since I left the city, I note that the railroads have pleaded the need of an additional delivery track on the already crowded riverfront, if Piasa and Market Streets are to be kept open to the river.

A mere statement of these conditions suggests the desirability of transferring the switching and exchange yards from their present location, at what is virtually the city's front door, to a point further east, where they will be out of the way and near the industries. Such a site, of many acres, still vacant, and with railroads on two sides of it and industries on a third, is to be found east of the bridge. *And the land, I understand, belongs to the city.* Here, then, is the opportunity to bring about easily a change that must mean much to Alton—in promoting efficiency and providing for future growth not less than in appearance and popular convenience.

Some objections will be offered: The land is now subject to overflow; a sea wall will have to be constructed and a fill made. True. But the land is now wasted. These things will have to be done, whatever use it is put to. The city cannot do the work—or thinks it cannot. How much better, then, to get it done, by entering into a contract with the railroads, which can make the improvements quickly and without financial hardship. An agreement might give to the railroads the use of the tract for switching and transfer yards, free or at nominal rental for a term of years, on condition that they do the work proposed, the roads being given the promise of an extension of the lease at a more adequate, but just, rental when the period covered by the contract expires. Such a bargain would seem to be equally favorable to city and to railroads.

The east end business district may declare that it does not want railroad yards between itself and the river. That business district should realize that its prosperity is dependent upon the east end industrial development, that all signs point to a closer figuring and narrower margin of manufacturing profits in future, and consequently no worse blow could be given to all of Alton, and especially to the east end, than the shackling and clogging of its shipping facilities. There are some advantages in serving as the business district of a busy industrial section; but freedom from a proximity to railroads is not one of them. As a matter of fact, however, the new tracks would

be further away than are the existing roads, and far less objectionable than those on the lake front at Chicago. Whatever the east end business district can do to promote the east end industrial development, it will do to its own profit.

RIDGE STREET.

What about Ridge Street? It is probable that for some years there would be very little, if any, extension of the sidings east of Ridge Street. They would simply dead-end at that street, and it would be a not less interesting and convenient thoroughfare to the river than if the land on its upper side should continue in its present condition—which is the probable alternative. When, or if, extensions of tracks east of Ridge Street became desirable, the street would be carried over them on a light steel viaduct, for which the railroads would probably be willing to pay.

THE RIVERFRONT.

The proposed change of freight yards would not free the riverfront, from Market Street to State, of freight tracks. It would simply prevent the conditions there from growing worse.

The riverfront—by which is meant that portion between the bridge and State Street—presents, then, the second, and a closely related, problem in the planning of the better Alton. As a matter of fact, it is a group of problems, for three distinct methods of handling the situation seem to be invited by the distinct conditions offered, respectively, at (1), the foot of Piasa and Market Streets; (2), in the stretch from Piasa to State on the one side, and from Market to the water tank on the other; and, (3), in the stretch from the water tank to the bridge. I shall take them up in order.

(1) The portion of riverfront opposite City Hall square—i. e. from Market to Piasa Streets—represents what may be called the water entrance or "Water Gate," to Alton. That fact imposes two requirements on our plan. These are (a), that the space here should be so arranged as to facilitate the easy handling of freight, and to promote the convenience and safety of passengers; (b), that it should do these things with a certain degree of dignity and special emphasis, and even with opportunity for decoration and embellishment on particular occasions. Pending the establishment of the harbor line, no definite plans can be made, but I think the scheme can be so outlined that when the line is established, and grades and width are known, it can be worked out in detail by engineers, with no particular difficulty.

The plan, then, as I think of it, would be to pave this portion of the river bank on a slope to the harbor line; but to break this long and wide expanse of paving, and at the same time to ease its grade for

trucking and to safeguard pedestrians, by building out, (on approximately the level of the present railroad tracks) concrete bays, or platforms—gazeebos, in the phraseology of landscape architecture—which, containing the present grade for a third or half of the distance to the harbor line, would be raised above the sloping pavement on all sides except the north. They should be protected on the three high sides, therefore, by a concrete balustrade; and at intervals there should be ornamental lights rising on concrete pylons from the balustrade. Seats should be provided in the platforms, or stages, whence one might look out on the panorama of the river, and down upon the busy shipping scenes below. At the highest, or river, side, concrete steps should descend to the level pavement. Thus pedestrians going to and from the boats would be separated from the vehicle traffic, for in going to a boat they would pass out to the platform's river side and then down the steps, which would bring them in close proximity to the vessel, without once crossing the line of trucks on the riverfront. The east and west length of the gazeebos, or stages, should be such that vehicle traffic, in passing around them will take an oblique course on the sloping pavement, so reducing the traction grade. To facilitate this result, the ends of the platforms should be curved, and there should be sufficient distance between them. The curving of the concrete ends will also lessen danger of any injury from ice or drift wood at times of high water, for there will be no corners to chip or walls to arrest free movement.

This form of riverfront treatment should be adopted, I think, from Piasa Street to a point just east of the station. Two platforms might well be located, the one south of the station, and the other between Market and Piasa Streets. That the cost of constructing them would be partially offset by the lessened area to pave scarcely needs pointing out; nor does the fact that the sewers, which now cut this portion of the riverfront, must in any development scheme be removed, by discharge into an intercepting sewer that shall carry their effluent as far east as the bridge, at least. The plan is obviously simple, practical and efficient while lending itself extremely well to social use and aesthetic effectiveness.

(2) and (3). East from the station, and west from Piasa to State Street, there should be a seawall,—or dike of piling for the present—behind which a fill should be made. It is impossible to contemplate the city's future, without realizing the desirability of the municipality securing the ownership of any of this frontage from the railroads to the harbor line, as far east, at all events, as the west track to the bridge, of which it is not now possessed. If occasion justifies, floating docks may be moored at the sea wall—in accordance with the usual European method of handling important riverfronts, and between Piasa and State Streets this will probably need to be done.



PRESENT CONDITION OF THE RIVERFRONT.



VIEW FROM THE RAILROAD STATION, SHOWING THE OLD CITY HALL.

But for a long time the area east of the water tank, when filled, could probably be used as a riverside park, for play purposes. It would have very little æsthetic value, overhung by the smoke of the railroads on three sides of it, reached only by crossing tracks, and quite separated from any residential section. But it would be a good place for the ball games and other sports of the workers in the nearby business and industrial sections; and such beauty as it did possess—in orderliness and green spaces, and background of shrubs,—would add much to the attractiveness of the city in that lasting “first impression” which travelers, by rail or river, would receive of Alton.

I realize that except for the detail of the concrete platforms there is little novel about these riverfront suggestions. I think they are substantially those of your city engineer, but they seem to me to be simple, serviceable and not too expensive, while yet promising a satisfactory appearance. It should be reflected that few towns have a front door so clearly and definitely located as Alton’s and therefore so well repaying good development.

A TRANSPORTATION CENTER.

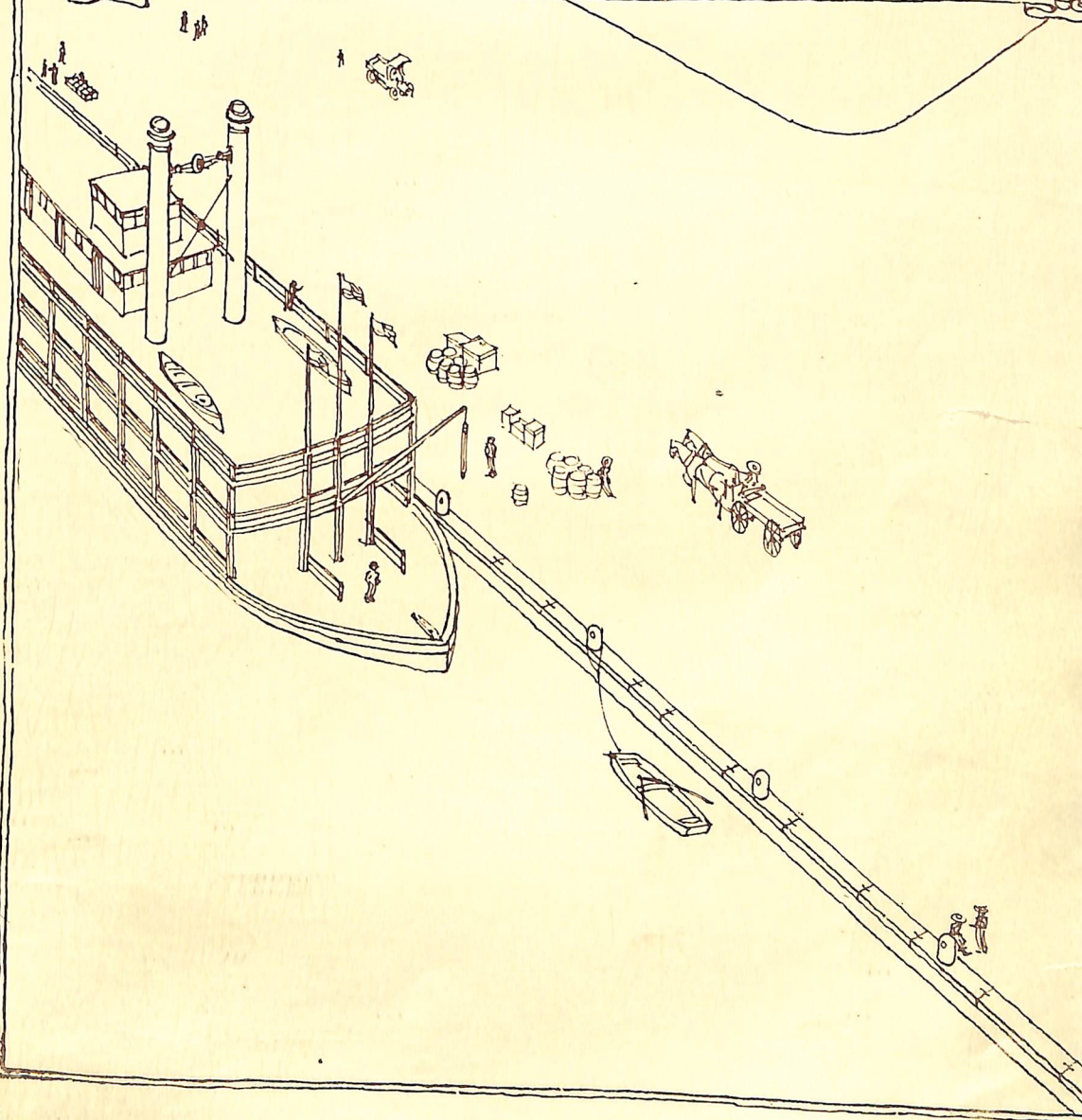
The suggestion has been made that a union passenger station might be located in the triangle between the tracks that curve out to the bridge. It is true that there would be certain operating conveniences and economics in such location; but as these would benefit the railroads rather than the citizens of Alton, the plan scarcely needs encouragement here. The move, if made, would not invite radical or immediate street changes. Its main influence would be to give an impetus to the present tendency to emphasize the relative business importance of Second Street as compared with the present business section west of Piasa. In such moves, however, there is a considerable amount of inertia to be overcome, and they are not often made quickly even when local pressure is strong in behalf of them. In the present instance, the proposed river front development, if carried out, will probably tend to hold the passenger stations in their present location. This is because it will emphasize the convenience and naturalness of the City Hall square as a transportation center.

This value would be further, and markedly, enhanced by the proposal that the present City Hall be sold to street railroad interests and remodeled as an interurban station and waiting room. Very much is to be said in favor of such a deal, if it can be put through. The advantages to the trolley company are so marked as to give encouragement, if the price be fair; while the gain to the city would be such that there should be no temptation to defeat the plan through an exorbitant valuation. There is no need to rehearse here the arguments in favor of a new City Hall, on a less noisy site. They are well understood; but it may be pointed out how greatly such a development

would make for that convenience of interurban travelers which was to be one of the things for which the city plan was to look out. We should then have water, steam railroad and electric railroad transportation all centering on the same square.

It is interesting to observe how the various changes which have thus far been considered reduce to order and system the transportation interests of the community in its relation to the outside world. Each change is simple and natural in itself; but they all fit remarkably well together to the making of a compact, convenient and well articulated system. If carried out, they must represent that co-operation between the municipality and the public service corporations from which alone best results to the citizens can be secured.

A SUGGESTED IMPROVEMENT
OF THE
RIVER FRONT, ALTON, ILLINOIS
CHARLES MULFORD ROBINSON — DECEMBER, 1913



PART III.
THE STREET SYSTEM.

In taking up the Street System, we come to the framework of the City Plan. Other factors owe much of their importance to the influence they exert upon this. Most streets having heretofore been platted with little comprehensive foresight, we have to interpret and note the needs of the existing scheme.

(a.) TRAFFIC STREETS.

I have spoken of the tendency of Second Street to become of increasing business importance. As the only east and west connection which offers an easy grade, as the thoroughfare that joins the two business centers by the shortest practicable route, as the artery by which the industrial section is united with the city, and by which practically all travel from the east must enter, it can hardly fail to become the most important arterial thoroughfare of Alton. This means not only business development, but large increase of traffic.

The street is now eighty feet wide. With further business development there will be quick need of giving efficiency to every inch of this. For that reason, the requirement of uniform and proper sidewalks, which was stirring the town at the time of my visit, could be viewed from the city planning standpoint only as a wise and necessary move in preparation for the future. It appeared, however, to be deficient in courage. This is not strange, considering the uproar which even its mild requirements caused. Its failure was in not going so far as to repeal the general ordinance which permits several feet of precious sidewalk space to be used for steps, for cellar and basement entrances, and so on. The city unquestionably has the right to repeal the ordinance, under Section 62, Article V., (tenth division) of the revised statutes of Illinois relating to cities.

In looking ahead, it is impossible not to realize that Second Street's present width, though turned to the best advantage, will some day be the very minimum for the easy performance of the street's civic function. It is necessary to allow for a double track car line; and on an eighty foot street, that leaves room between each track and curb for only one line of moving vehicles, after allowing space for standing vehicles at the curb. This, clearly, is the very minimum requirement for a business street that is to serve efficiently as an artery for through travel. In most cities, such an artery may with almost equal convenience be any one of three or four parallel streets. In Alton, the down town east and west artery must be Second Street and it should be prepared accordingly.

To a singular and fortunate extent, what is true of Second Street is true of other streets in Alton. There are certain ones that are un-

questionably destined, owing to topographical conditions, to be the traffic thoroughfares. This is an ideal condition from the standpoint of a city plan, for the circulation of traffic can be most economically commoded if it be concentrated on a few special streets. These can then be prepared for it—made ready for this primary civic function of facilitating communication—while the other streets can be treated as local, with economy both of upkeep and construction.

The preparation of streets for traffic efficiency, means that they must have adequate width of roadway, easy grade, good paving and good lighting. The streets which nature has best fitted to carry the heaviest traffic of Alton are—omitting Piasa, which has been given up to the railroad—Ridge, Washington, Henry and Belle, leading back from the river; and, after Second, Upper State and part of Seventh, parallel with the river. Of these, Henry and Seventh already have the special width of ninety-nine feet; Second, we have seen, is eighty. Ridge and Washington have the fair width of sixty-six; and only Belle, with sixty feet, may be said to be certainly too narrow for probable future requirements.

Fortunately, the upper portion of Belle Street can be quite easily widened now, nearly all the buildings standing back from the street. This fact practically eliminates the item of damages, for if no improvements are disturbed the courts are likely to rule, as they have repeatedly done elsewhere, on similar occasions, that the increased width of street will offset a small reduction in the depth of long lots. To widen the upper part of Belle Street, then, to at least sixty-six feet, and possibly even to eighty feet—which would mean ten feet on a side—ought not now to be a difficult or costly procedure. In fact, as a number of years are likely to elapse before the greater width will be really needed in this portion of the street, it may be best to acquire for the present simply an easement over the few feet of front garden space which the city will some day wish to put into street. Under such arrangement (of which examples may be found in the case of Sixteenth Street in Washington, and of streets in various Pennsylvania cities, where a state law expressly encourages such action) the property owners are allowed the use of the strip and may keep their fences outside of it, until the city needs to take it. This arrangement reduces present cost to practically nothing and yet insures the city against having to pay for improvements on the needed strip when the time comes to take it.

In the lower, closely built up and already crowded, portion the widening of Belle Street is much more difficult. Here the most feasible plan, perhaps, is to adopt the method by which Philadelphia has successfully widened the down town portions of Chestnut, Walnut and Arch Streets, where property values were not only immensely higher actually, but were higher relatively, than on Belle Street in

Alton. They were, in fact, the highest in the city. Ordinances were passed widening the street as it appeared on the city map. The ordinances then continued: "After the confirmation and establishment of said lines, it shall not be lawful for any owner or builder to erect any new building, or to rebuild or alter the front, or add to the height of any building now erected, without making it recede so as to conform to the line established." For a complete discussion of this method, I must refer the Board and city officials to pages 73, 74 of my volume, "The Width and Arrangement of Streets." It may suffice to say here that the added street width was secured, by a method tested in the courts and approved by them, at an insignificant cost to the city and without hardship to any one. The change was gradual, of course, and yet at the time when the need for the widened street had become urgent, the city had it.

So much for the width of the main arterial streets. Their adequate paving and lighting are matters of local administrative detail that do not require discussion by me. The grades are generally already fixed, and it is because they are comparatively good that these streets are destined to be the arteries of the future larger city. Yet there should be note here of the desirability—even of the necessity—of the proposed Seventh Street viaduct. For this, spanning the deep Piasa Street valley, is to unite the two east and west arterials into one long trunkline street paralleling the river on the high lands, and affording comfortable grades from one end of town to the other. It may be also observed that a half-block extension of Seventh Street, at its east end, would bring it into Sixth, so carrying the direct connection much further east. Indeed, by means of Vandalia Road, it might carry it to the extreme northeast end.

It may be also observed that the northward extension of broad Market Street, as it is shown on the map, would provide a thoroughfare of much value for opening to settlement the admirable building sites in the valley east of upper Alby Street. This extension would include a viaduct, carrying the street over the C. and A. tracks, and probably reaching street grades at about Seventeenth Street, so giving to a large territory easy connection with the transportation center of the city. But its main value, as I have suggested, would be in opening new tracts for settlement. These have heretofore lacked development largely because wanting the quick transportation facilities which an extended Market Street would readily offer.

Again, but beyond the confines of the present city, there is need of platting a street that shall be adequate to furnish street car facilities between the industries at the east end of town and the attractive home sites on the rising lands to the north, where thousands of employees must be ultimately housed. It would seem that the owners of the latter tracts must so keenly appreciate this need that self-interest would compel their insistence upon it.

It may be worth while to point out, in this connection, that whatever increases the available area of convenient building sites tends to promote healthful and economical living—two factors that go far indeed toward making the city a better place to live in. And should it seem as if, perhaps, unnecessary stress had been laid on the value of easy grade for arterial streets, there must be realization of what this means in developing the efficiency of a city. It is strikingly shown in the following compilations: One dollar will pay for transporting one ton ten miles on a good road; but it will carry one ton 300 miles on a good railroad, and will carry it from 1200 to 1500 miles on deep water. Hence the exceeding costliness, relatively, of all urban transportation. If, now, the street has a seven per cent. grade, the ton that can be transported ten miles for a dollar, shrinks to 200 pounds, or to only one-tenth of a ton—which means that the cost is increased ten times. If the grade be ten per cent., the burden must be reduced to one-fiftieth—which is to say that the high cost of urban transportation is then increased fifty times! There are streets in Alton—important streets—that have grades as high as fifteen per cent. Consider the tax such conditions must locally impose, if it be not possible to avoid those streets by taking traffic ways of easy grade.

(b.) LOCAL STREETS.

Regarding the development of the city's non-arterial streets—by which is meant the relative proportion of sidewalk and roadway space, and so forth—there will be discussion in another section of the report. But in so far as the street system—the plan of the city—is concerned, those streets may be treated as local. I would urge, as respects the platting of new streets of this character, that directness is by no means the first essential. On the picturesque, and often rough, contours of Alton, there can often be secured, at once, both ease of grade and attractiveness of appearance by allowing the streets to curve around the hills, instead of making them climb over them or toboggan down them. And this will be done with gain rather than with loss of efficiency. Were it possible to plan Alton from the beginning, it might indeed be made—with its rolling hills and rising terraces—one of the most beautiful of cities. On the eve of a rapid future growth, it is not too late now to plan the subdivisions and extensions in this way.

These comments apply not simply to high class residence sections but to the areas that are to be occupied by modest homes. Beautiful street plans, which mean no increase of cost—but which unfortunately must now await a topographical survey—are perhaps of more importance to those of slender means than they are to the well-to-do. The latter can travel, and can shut themselves in beautiful houses and have spacious gardens; but for the former the horizon of life is largely bounded by the streets of the neighborhood. One of the saddest sights

in Alton to-day is the absolutely rectangular platting of new streets in the large subdivisions on the hillside north of Second Street just east of Main, and thus near the industries.

The suggestion does, however, apply as well to high class sections. A large industrial growth, we noted at the beginning, is as sure to result in a demand for some attractive sites for comparatively expensive homes as it is for multitudes of low-priced building lots. The opportunities for developing high class sections in Alton are certainly exceptional. Most conspicuous in this respect are, from a scenic standpoint, the bluffs in the Bowman tract, for which a skilled landscape architect has already made an attractive plan. Of a different type, but rich in possibilities, is such a tract as that south of College Avenue and west of Washington Street—in a section already high class.

PART IV.

THE PARK SYSTEM.

GENERAL PARK NEEDS.

Closely akin to the street system—in fact, actually a part of it, in the broad sense—is the park system.

There are several ways of thinking of a city's parks. One way is to regard the park simply as a beauty spot—an area reserved for the public enjoyment of scenery, or landscape, and to which the citizens may come for this purpose, from all parts of the town. Such a view almost necessarily classes the park as a luxury—perhaps unconsciously—and consequently results in comparatively meagre park provision. A second view conceives of the city's park system as made up, not of one or more oases in the desert of streets, unrelated either to one another or to the streets, but as a pervasive pattern woven into the fabric of the town and stamping it all with beauty and charm. Where this conception obtains there is likely to be a large park acreage, some of it taking the form of parkways and boulevards, for under these conditions the parks are not thought of as a luxury, but as a necessary part of the well planned city. It is realized that they affect its whole structure, and that, instead of involving cost, they give profit through increased realty values. In a third view, the parks are thought of as the municipality's physical provision for recreation. In such case we shall find reservations near the shops and among the homes of laborers as surely as in more expensive neighborhoods, for now the ideal is to bring the park to the people.

Scientific city planning regards a combination of the last two views as offering the true measure of the functions and obligations of a city park system. But I am inclined to fear that the view first described represents more nearly the popular attitude in Alton—an attitude which the city must discard if it hopes to secure a park system worthy of so stunning a site and performing an active social service to all kinds of people. In this report the first view will not be accepted.

Two things particularly determine the character of the park system that would be ideal for a given community—the sort of park system, that is to say, which the community should try, as rapidly as possible, to develop. These are: (1), the needs of the people; (2), the topography.

In Alton we have a population of workers. The city now is, and will more markedly become, an industrial community. The prime needs of such a population are relaxation and physical exercise. There must be places where strained eyes can be rested by long views, where the stifling air of the shops can be exchanged for fresh winds, and where for the closely confining walls of little homes there may be room to swing a cat without hitting the baby or knocking the lamp off



SHIELD'S RUN VALLEY.

the table. And there must be places where can be exercised muscles that are not used at the machine or bench or behind the counter.

To realize that these are the main park needs of Alton is to appreciate how inadequately they are satisfied by Rock Spring Park. This park has many merits. It is admirable as one unit of a park system, but it should not be thought of as more than that.

If we consider the topography of the city, only the same conclusion can be reached. Here is the great Mississippi river, forming the town's south border. No glimpse of it may be had from Rock Spring Park. Here are high bluffs offering wonderful views, of which Rock Spring has none across the country; and picturesque ravines and draws and broad play spaces—all the topographical opportunities for a park system greatly diversified, wonderfully beautiful, and entering intimately into the structure of the city and the life of the people. Rock Spring makes a beautiful beginning, but it ought to be considered as only that.

Somewhere in the vicinity of the industrial section there must be a reservation where the workers can play. It has been suggested, in discussing the Riverfront, that the broad strip of river shore between the water tank—about opposite Alby Street—and the bridge might be developed as a park. Development as this kind of a park, with access by a footbridge over the railroad tracks, would be a very good use to put it to, when the river wall has been constructed and the land filled in.

Much further east, where such an area would be conveniently useful to the workers in the growing industrial section, there is a valley, called, I believe, Emigrants Hollow. This, still unspoiled, comes down to Milton Road at one end, only a quarter of a mile from the Lead and Strawboard works, and at the other winds up, through good timber, to the high lands where a substantial school house, already built, testifies to at least some official recognition of the district's future as a home section for a large population. The tract is well outside the present city limits, but is just where building may be so soon expected that the time to secure the reservation has come. In developing it, walks and a road carried down the valley should make it useful as a beautiful connection between the homes and the shops, as well as simply a play-space.

THE SHIELD'S RUN VALLEY.

But the most striking opportunity of this kind is to be found in the Shield's Run Valley. One must follow this on foot to appreciate what a really great opportunity it offers for the park development of Alton—though a glance at the map shows the extraordinary good fortune of its location, direction and extent. To secure and develop this strip would be the greatest thing from the city planning standpoint

that could be done for Alton to-day; while to let slip the chance it offers would be to deny to the city, forever, an opportunity that surely is almost unique. Fortunately, the land is not high priced and is mainly held—as I understand—in large units.

Starting at Second Street near the Washington Street intersection, the tract extends with sufficient directness to Rock Spring Park, passing on the way broad spaces that lend themselves at once to play and beautification. It offers to Rock Spring the attractive approach from town which is now so greatly needed—so enhancing very much the civic value of the present park—and it provides that rarely attained but coveted feature of a city plan, a radial park. In doing this, it brings attractive park facilities in close proximity to an exceptionally large area, and Rock Spring is transformed from an isolated unit to an important feature of a park system.

Nor does the Shield's Branch possibility stop at Rock Spring Park. A drive at least may be carried further up the valley, through the Country Club grounds and through lands that are yet unplatted. Swinging gradually to the west, this will join extended Salu street, or better yet be carried on to Elm Street. Continuing along the latter, one has only a comparatively short distance to traverse to reach beautiful Hop Hollow. The connection road would pass the monument, as a feature of interest at its beginning, while its lower end is very beautiful in itself.

HOP HOLLOW AND THE BLUFFS.

Romantic Hop Hollow road brings us to the river, so that our park strip will now have made a semi-circle around the city. On the bluff above it, lies the Bowman tract, and the landscape architect who platted this for a high class residence sub-division has planned a road winding down the side, at easy grade to strike Hop Hollow. If Hop Hollow is included in the park system, as a parkway in the round-the-city loop, it is inconceivable that those who develop the tract on the bluff above, would not willingly provide this connection without cost to the city. So the drive, rising from the shadowy ravine, would mount to the heights, with their superb river views, in a transition startlingly fine.

Thence, proceeding now toward the city, it would make use of streets—first, the handsome curving street of a high class residence subdivision; then, at least for the present, Danforth Street to State, to Jefferson, to Division and then to Bluff. But ultimately the drive must reach Bluff Street more directly, by a scenic route close to the edge. From Bluff Street it could be carried along the bank, avoiding Summit Street hill by cutting on the side, and so to the little outlook park. From here it is a short distance, via Prospect Street and State, to the heart of town; and our circuit will have been completed. It is excep-



VIEWS ON HOP HOLLOW ROAD.

tionally attractive in its variety of scenery; in the ease with which it can be made; in its accessibility to the city throughout its whole length; in its tying together of different parts of town and of divergent street systems. One rarely finds a boulevard circuit which, so readily made, will prove so satisfactory from many points of view. It extends, to be sure, beyond the city's present limits at some points. But that fact imposes no handicap upon the system's development, since under the laws of Illinois, district park systems can be organized without reference to city or township lines.

THE SMALL PARKS.

There is a word to be said as to some of the existing small parks. I do not speak of Rock Spring as that is being developed in accordance with a plan.

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Court House Square might be rendered a good deal more effective than it is to-day. And so central is this and so prominent that maximum results must be here obtained. The two most important views of the Square are that from Second Street, looking up toward it and that from Easton Street, looking down upon it. The view from Third simply repeats the latter in lessened degree. First, then, the four rows of poplars should come out, and the billboard attached to the stone retaining wall at the foot of the park must be removed. A fine example it sets in the use of city property! These changes made, a short flight of ornamental stone steps, with landings and balustrades, should descend to the half block of Easton Street between the Square and Second. The roadway here should be narrowed, and if possible abolished entirely. Viewed from the other end of the Square, the special need is to plant out the backs of the Second Street buildings. With the poplars out of the way, a handsome screen of ornamental planting can hide those buildings and frame the Square with beauty instead of with ugliness. Regrading is needed also, to break the hard formal lines of the terraces.

As to the Square's north side, the fact that the Easton Street roadway cannot extend beyond Third Street, removes the necessity for continuing it in a straight line to Third. By forking the roadway at the beginning of the Square, so that it curves east and west into Third, we shall not only ease grades and shorten distances; but we shall add to the seeming size of the park and restore to it an area that really belongs to it but which now any one might think was private property. All these changes, simple as they are, will remake Court Square, and very much for the better.

Seminary Square can be passed over, as now virtually given up to schools and schoolyards. Public Square, which has special future importance because of its location on arterial Seventh Street, is now only a deep hole. It should be filled enough at least to drain into one of

the nearby sewers—either on Sixth Street or on Alby. Then probably its development as a sunken garden is the best use to make of it. The triangles along the south side of diagonal Court Street should be relieved of their rows of poplars. Orchard effects are not desirable on little street triangles, and poplars are dangerous trees to plant in cities owing to their propensity for thrusting their roots into sewers. The triangle at Court and George, enclosed with privet, is much better than the others.

The Square between Locust and Salu, in the far northeastern part of town, has had too little development to require much comment, nor is there much to do with it except to develop it on the lines of the conventional city square. The park at the top of Prospect Street is so obviously intended as an outlook point, that this feature of it cannot fail to be emphasized. However, it greatly needs to have added to its area, especially for outlook purpose, the small strip at the southeast corner.

PLAYGROUNDS.

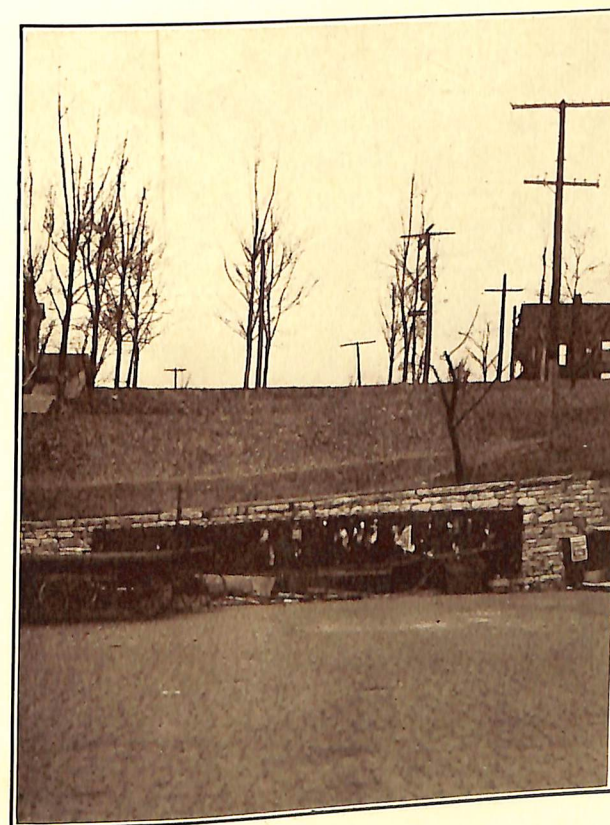
Of the parks mentioned, it may be observed that not one is a children's playground in the special sense which that term has come to have in the modern building of cities. Also, not one of them is especially well fitted, in location or character, for such purpose—save Seminary Square which, as schoolyard for the most part, is of course used by the children. But this condition is not a bad feature of the park system, for in cities of moderate size schoolyards are generally the best sites for playgrounds. They are in the center of child population; shelter and toilet facilities are at hand; supervision is easily arranged; and the times when they are needed for play are the times when the schoolplant is not in use. The main necessities are two. First, to see that the grounds are large enough—a matter open to just as simple computation as is the building's size. In such a case, for instance, as the Milnor Avenue school, where a yard which is obviously too small is surrounded by much vacant ground, additional land should be promptly secured. Second, to see that they are supervised. The latter requirement is not, necessarily, a Park Board's duty. It may often be managed equally well, or better, by the School Board or by a separate agency.

SUMMARY.

When one realizes that in the above comments all the parks of Alton have been touched upon, there must be appreciation of the city's need for greater park area, and of the reasonableness of the additions proposed in discussing the round-the-city chain. This was strongly impressed upon me, for I came to Alton direct from Council Bluffs,



VIEW FROM THE BLUFFS.



LOWER END OF COURT HOUSE SQUARE
FROM SECOND STREET.

whither I had been called by the Park Commission to advise as to what further park purchases they should make. There I found a city of 30,000 population, having already some 1200 acres in parks, or one acre to every 25 people. In Alton there are only 70 acres for 20,000 people; and the per capita park expenditure is 30 cents a year!

Yet, with a bonded debt of less than \$60,000, and a borrowing capacity of nearly a quarter of a million, Alton cannot plead poverty as the excuse. If it does not have the park system it ought to have, and might have, it is because of want of self confidence, civic pride and gumption. And these wants must be considered popular rather than individual, for the one real park which Alton owns was not a city purchase but a gift.

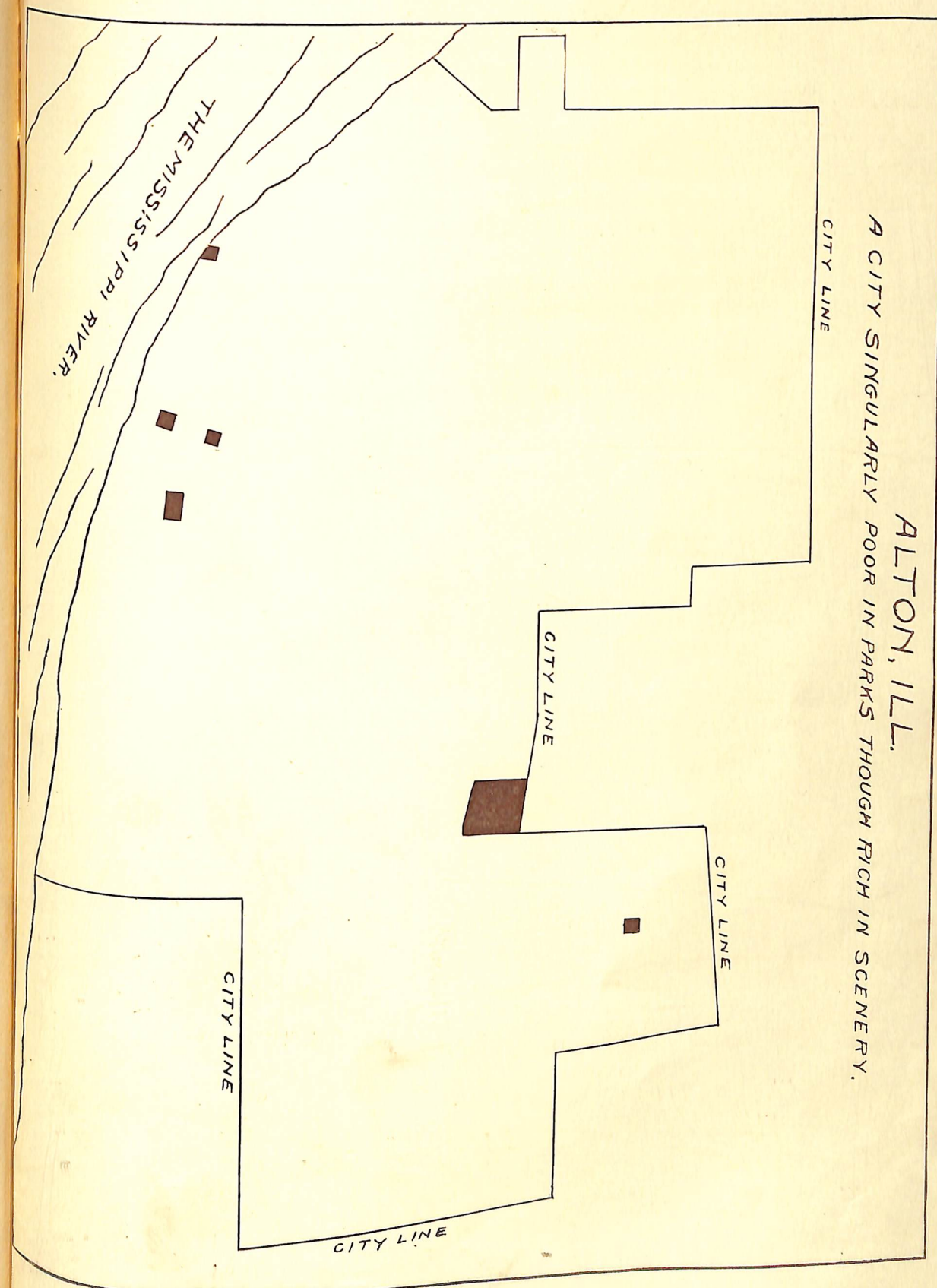
It is reasonable, then, to suppose that the new spirit now stirring Alton will give to the city, by public or by private action, the parks it needs. If the action is to be taken by the public, it will be doubtless by a bond issue. With reference to this, I want to point out two facts: First, the propriety of issuing park bonds. To issue bonds for school buildings, for pavements, for water works, for a city hall—or for almost any other municipal purpose—is to issue them for a security which suffers depreciation. But parks, on the other hand, grow constantly in value, so that as the bonds approach maturity the property which they represent is more valuable than it was when they were issued. Again, the bond issue throws most, or possibly all, of the cost on posterity. This is fair, for the parks bought now will be far more precious to the next generation than to the present, and will give to it greater returns. The pay-as-you-go policy loses its attractive nobility when one realizes that in the matter of parks it may prove only a dog-in-the-manger policy as respects the generations that follow. For park opportunities do not wait in growing cities. The tract that is available to-day may be out of reach to-morrow, and so the refusal of the present generation to buy it, or to let a succeeding generation buy it, may well prove final—a course which will not invite the admiration of your children.

The second point which I will make, in reference to an issue of park bonds is that it is generally found easier to include all the requirements at once than to vote on the question piecemeal, year after year. There are several reasons for this. Not only can all park enthusiasm be then concentrated for one grand campaign, possessing the attraction of a novelty which successive campaigns for the like purpose can never have; but people are more likely to approve an expenditure which completes, rather than begins, a series. Furthermore, if all neighborhoods are included in the benefits—as they can be only when a system is voted for—no one section will actively oppose the project. Finally, when park property is bought piecemeal, the early purchases increase the value of that which must be subsequently taken

in order to round out the system. Thus delay, which is most likely to be fatal to the consummation of a comprehensive park scheme, is sure to be expensive.

In that respect the provision of parks differs from most other municipal necessities. If a city is willing to postpone the benefit and convenience of sewers and pavements, and to bear the cost involved in getting along without them, it can put in the required system when it gets ready, at no sacrifice of completeness and not necessarily at any higher price. But to delay in securing required lands for parks is to invite failure ever to secure them all, and to insure an increase in the cost of those which are obtained.

These comments apply as well whether the lands are to be bought privately or publicly. So in a double sense it may be said that in park matters he gives twice who gives promptly; and surely no monument to one's self, or memorial to a loved one, can exceed a park for persistent effectiveness, in its increasingly precious and beautiful ministry to all people through unnumbered years.



PART V.
ADMINISTRATIVE AND
MISCELLANEOUS.

Under this heading, it is not proposed to go into a long discussion of political policy or administrative defects, if such there be. Presumably, the people have the sort of political system they want to have; and certainly it is no part of the function of this study to propose changes in personnel. We have to deal here with results, not with methods; with the community, not with those it chooses for its representatives.

The question to be asked, then, in this section of the Report, is how far the city of Alton can be changed for the better without adding any parks, or changing any railroads, or altering any street lines, and without now considering the river. It is a question which includes that group of problems usually designated as "civic improvements." This group will not remake a city; but it is mightily powerful to transform the city's appearance, since it penetrates all parts of it; to add to the pleasure, comfort and ease of life in the city, for it affects all the people, and it costs little—or may prove to be even economical. But there is nothing appealingly spectacular about it; and with the multiplicity of interests affected it calls for ceaseless vigilance and constant effort. Some of this can well be offered by the Board of Trade; some by other organizations and some by the enactment of new ordinances, or by the enforcement of laws that are now ignored. But any legislative procedure must have the backing of public opinion to be effective.

THE SMOKE NUISANCE.

Beginning with the business district, I think the most striking defects in the present day Alton are the quantity of smoke and the number of poles and overhead wires. Of the two, the poles and wires seem to me the worst. The smoke nuisance is very obvious, of course, but I was assured that the imminent removal of the power plant would greatly remedy that—as it surely would—and this is a more excusable evil and one less easy to correct than is the menace and disfigurement of wires. Moreover, with the importation of cheap electric power and the development of a segregated industrial district, the Alton smoke evil—very serious as it now is—will probably lessen by degrees.

It should be recognized, however, that dense smoke is not so much due to the kind of fuel that is used as it is to the kind of stoking; and that the sign it writes on the sky above a city, to those who know, is "Waste and Inefficiency." When employers realize this, there is likely to be considerable improvement on private initiative. This can, however, be hurried by ordinances, of which there are many practical examples. When such cities as Pittsburgh, for instance,



POLES AND WIRES.



SIDEWALK ENCROACHMENT.

adopt an anti-smoke ordinance of a character that can be enforced and that yet gives results, Alton has no need to despair.

A form of ordinance often adopted in cities where soft coal is used is that which limits to a certain brief number of minutes the period during which dense smoke may be emitted from a stack or chimney. This does not make it illegal to put on soft coal; but it does prevent a filling up of the furnace in order to save the fireman trouble, regardless of the consequent loss to his employer and to the community. It may be of interest to add that when the Pittsburgh ordinance was adopted, it was not on the request of women, or of improvement societies; but in response to a petition from the business men themselves; and the candidates for the position of Smoke Inspector were examined by a commission from the Chamber of Commerce. The result was that the appointee was neither a politician nor a visionary; and that he realized that he was expected to effect an improvement and to do this in a rational way, and that in so acting he would have the backing of the business community.

There are many improvements which can well be inaugurated by women, and by local or general improvement clubs; but the smoke evil is best attacked by business men. I would refer the Board to, especially, Bulletin 49, of the United States Bureau of Mines (Department of the Interior) entitled "City Smoke Ordinances and Smoke Abatement." This was issued in 1912, and is an authoritative and very thorough and practical discussion of the subject. The American Civic Association also has a pamphlet upon it; and Z. A. Willard, 70 Kilby Street, Boston, has issued several pamphlets that deal with the subject in an illuminating way.

POLES AND WIRES.

With regard to the poles and wires, the accompanying photograph illustrates the condition. This condition is one to be deprecated as a fire danger—in hampering the operations of firemen—not less than as a disfigurement to the city. It is also a menace to life, not only in the case of a fire, but because wires by crossing may cause fire, and because of their liability to break and fall during storm, particularly an ice storm. Furthermore, when wires are broken in storm or cut for fire, there is interruption of service, which means inconvenience and cost.

Because the public service corporations which string wires are not philanthropic organizations, and because they pay taxes rather than receive them, and must be allowed to live and grow and improve their service, it is not practicable to order all wires underground. But there comes a point where it is practicable and reasonable to order some of them down. It is actually cheaper, in fact, for a company to build a conduit carrying a hundred pairs of telephone wires in a cable

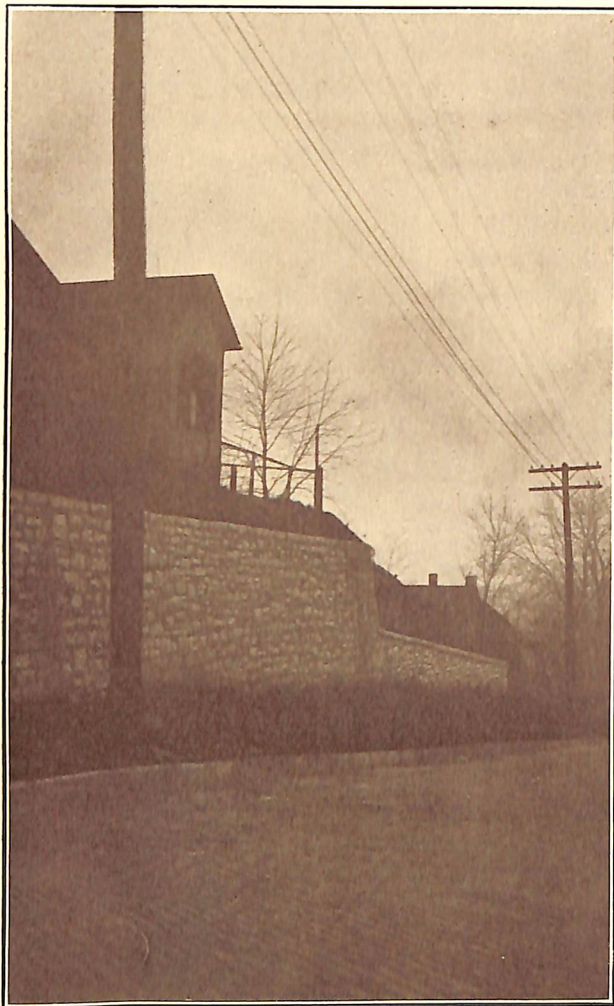
than to build a pole line for that number of bare wires. And once a conduit is built, it is cheaper to operate underground than above. And in residence sections, there is economy to the companies in combining on the use of one line of poles instead of each company maintaining its own. These considerations suggest methods of dealing with the problem which should be fair to the companies as well as advantageous to the city.

The problem really resolves itself into two parts: The congested business section, where there are many wires in a small space; and the residence district where fewer wires are spread over a very large area. In the latter case, it is not fair to order wires underground. To require a joint use of poles—as is now done in many cities—and that, by degrees and on all extensions, pole lines shall be put through alleys or on the rear lines of the lots, is, however, to impose no hardship on the companies and yet to improve greatly the appearance of the streets and to save the street trees. I was glad to note a beginning, at least, of this movement in Alton. Certainly there is no reason for property owners to object to having poles on the rear lot-lines. They are in no one's way there and they give to the property owner a better street. In one city of which I know, where the lighting company is now erecting a comparatively low concrete pole for rear lot-line use, the property is constantly petitioning for such a transfer from the streets.

In the business section, one of two methods is usually followed.

(1). The city may construct conduits on such streets as it selects, and require the companies to put the wires into them. In the many cities in which this has been done, the companies have been willing to pay a rental that was sufficient to cover interest charges and provide a sinking fund sufficient to pay in a reasonable time the cost of the conduit. In other words, the city really does no more than advance its credit, and at the companies' expense gets the wires underground in municipally owned conduits.

(2). The other method is to order the companies to act. This can be best accomplished ordinarily by entering into an agreement that a certain distance of street shall each year be freed of overhead wires. Beginning with the worst places, the improvement spreads year by year. Very soon the business district is relieved; then by degrees, the main highways, and then the avenues, the city usually designating especially those streets every season which are to be repaved, so making sure that the new pavement will not be soon torn up. By making the requirement for each year reasonable, no injustice is done to the companies and yet gradually important results are achieved. Since I visited Alton, I have been making studies for a city plan report for Topeka, Kansas. In that city not a pole or wire was to be seen over the sidewalks of the principal business streets. The result is



WALK LOCATION MAY INJURE PROPERTY.

that the city immediately impresses one as alert, progressive, and up to the minute in modern methods. Alton has far greater natural advantages than has Topeka; and the City Hall Square and broad Market Street give the arriving traveler a most favorable impression. It is only in the things most easily corrected that Alton falls behind.

LOW AWNINGS.

It is notable on the business streets of Alton that awnings are allowed to hang very low—so low as to scrape hats. This is entirely unnecessary and can be prevented by ordinance. The Board of Trade will surely realize that whatever lessens the comfort of those walking on the business streets diminishes the attractiveness of those streets and thus injures trade.

SIDEWALK ENCROACHMENT.

Quite serious also is the narrowing of sidewalk space by encroachments in the business districts. On occasion this must soon lead, if it has not already done so, to congestion. It is bad enough when the walk is narrowed by the presence of poles and other constructions at the curb; but the ordinance which permits “steps, platform or other fixture” to extend three feet into the sidewalk—and basement ways as much as five feet—not only permits a narrowing of the available width of walk—sometimes by as much as fifty per cent—but it compels pedestrians to use that part of the walk which is furthest from the show windows. The result of this is surely bad for trade. Moreover, pedestrians are obliged to use that part of the walk most spattered by the mud and dust of the roadway.

PROJECTING SIGNS.

A real cleaning out of the business district of Alton would include not only less smoke, fewer wires overhead, and sidewalks available for pedestrianism from curb to building line, and so unobstructed that a man could walk with head erect. It would mean also that his eye would not be assailed by a multitude of signs projecting over the sidewalk. Alton is no worse in this respect than are many other cities; but in the well developed city of the future no such signs will be visible, by day at least. They only blanket one another and give to a street that should be dignified and handsome a likeness to the advertising columns of a newspaper. In more than one city projecting signs already have been eliminated, or greatly curtailed, by ordinances proposed by business men; and in several cities where illuminated signs are still permitted to be thrust over the walk, because of the brilliance they give to the street at night, an ordinance requires that they be placed on hinges and folded back against the buildings during the hours when they are not lighted.

PARKING STRIPS.

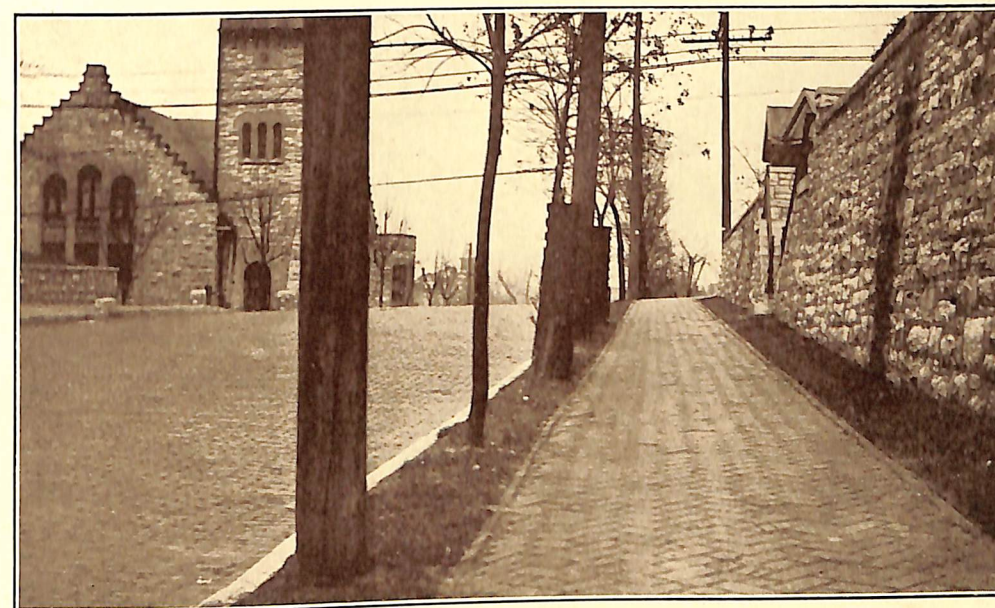
Just as a fault of the business district is too great a narrowing of sidewalks, a serious fault in the residence districts is too much narrowing of parking strips. Generally this is due to excessive width of roadway rather than to too wide a paved walk. The ordinance, for instance, which requires that on streets 80 feet wide, the curb shall be placed twelve feet from the property line, leaves a roadway space wide enough for seven teams abreast—a provision that is quite absurd for most streets in Alton, and that is needlessly costly. Even in the Borough of the Bronx, New York, where it is necessary to provide for the on-rushing tide of metropolitan traffic, an ordinance requires that the roadways on eighty foot streets shall be fourteen feet narrower than Alton demands.*

The cost of such excessive provision, not only on eighty-foot streets, but on the others, is a considerable item, for it includes the cost of paving, the keeping in repair of needless width of pavement, and its cleaning and flushing. Nor is the question wholly one of economics. Too great width of roadway emphasizes paucity of traffic, and makes a city look much less busy than perhaps it really is. Also, a parking strip of twelve or fourteen inches is very difficult to maintain in proper order, so that it tends to become a ragged fringe of long grass and weeds, and it is so out of scale with the wide street that it adds nothing to the street's beauty. In fact, a recently enacted ordinance in Columbus, Ohio, requires that on residence streets the outside line of no walk shall be less than three feet from the outside line of the curbstone.

The broad parking strip, which is cheaper than narrow parking and wide road, makes, I have said, a much more beautiful street. The wide parking has, also, other advantages. It keeps the noisy, dust raising traffic further from the houses and further from the suits and dresses of those who are walking, and it affords a broader belt of safety between the growingly dangerous roadway traffic and the little children on the walks. Finally, the broad parking makes it possible to place the street trees where horses cannot gnaw them, and it provides the trees with better nourishment. The trees on city streets need all the help they can get.

As it happens, narrow parking is by no means universal in Alton. There are several examples of wide parking—as on Third Street east from Market—so that it is very easy to compare the two methods of street development. Indeed, one may stand at the corner of Third and Alby Streets and see both sorts, on the two sides of the Post Office; and that comparison is likely to be more influential than any contrast

*NOTE.—A striking example of illogical street development is offered in Alton by the north sidewalk of Fifth street, east from Market. Here there is no parking at all, in order that the roadway—which does not carry car tracks—may have a width of forty-two feet, or more than enough for five teams abreast. Yet this street dead-ends at Market.



ALBY STREET PARKING.



MODERN PARKING METHODS.

A street in an Iowa city which fairly exemplifies modern parking methods.
Note the location of the trees.

I can draw. But it is worth while to emphasize the economic and practical advantages of the wide parking when, as happily on most Alton streets, it can be secured without the slightest impediment to traffic.

In conclusion I should say that on most of the 60-foot streets in the residence section there is no need for a roadway of more than twenty-six feet—which will give space for three teams or automobiles abreast; and that on most of the 80-foot streets, a thirty-four foot roadway is wide enough even if there be a car track.

It may be added that the distance from curb to property line should influence to some extent the radius which is used in rounding the curb at corners. I found some corners that were pretty good, where a long radius had been used, and some—not all of them bearing the marks of age—that were very bad. Generally the radius should be long—say, 8, 10 or 12 feet. It is wise to remember that vehicle traffic cannot turn at right angles and that the purpose of cutting off corners at all is to accommodate such traffic. It would be suggestively interesting at some corners (constructed by preceding city engineers) to contrast the curve of the wheel tracks with that of the curb.

SIDEWALK GRADES.

Another suggestion may be made with regard to sidewalks in the residence districts. The ordinance which requires that they "shall conform as nearly as may be to the grades of their respective streets" must often lead to unfortunate results. In the case of a cut, for instance, this requirement increases the cross section to be excavated and thus adds considerably to the expense of making the street. But with more serious effect, it leaves abutting property so far above the street as to lessen greatly its value. This could be obviated if the ordinance permitted a walk so well above the roadway as to form a terrace, for then we should diminish—perhaps by half—the seeming distance of the property above the street. There is no reason why sidewalks should be at, or very near, pavement grade, assuming a sufficient width of parking to allow private driveways to cross the walks at sidewalk grade; and the suggested variation will, when justified, make a more picturesque and interesting street.

SANITATION AND STREET TREES.

One or two other matters remain to be spoken of, though they refer rather to sanitation than to the City Plan. No one can go about Alton without surprised concern at the number of outdoor vaults, or privies, to be seen from city streets—even from some down town streets, where there surely are sewers. Where a sewer is available,

connection with it should be compulsory. With all due respect for tradition and terror of costs, Alton has to remember that it is now of the twentieth century, and is judged by twentieth century standards.

So, too, it may be said that the private collection of garbage by unlicensed collectors is a very primitive method, which is costly and unsatisfactory. If this is true among the homes of the well-to-do—as house wives can generally testify—it is still more true among the poor. For just where there is most need of frequent, regular and sanitary collection, it will be most infrequent, irregular and unsanitary because there its collection pays least well. The fault in the system is that the collection is voluntary and uncontrolled. This is one subject—and a big and urgent one—that the women's organizations might well take up.

Another is general cleanliness, not merely of the streets—which it is the duty of the city to keep clean—but of private property, of front yards and back yards. And another is the improvement of the street trees, by which is meant their better planting and better care. This is best managed by having a city tree warden, or commission. Since the most commonplace city may be made beautiful by its trees, what might they not do for Alton, splendidly enthroned upon its hills?

CITY HALL SITE.

The location of a new City Hall, in case the present structure is transformed into a trolley station, is yet to be discussed. To this matter I gave a good deal of thought. The site should be central and reasonably quiet, and it should be dignified and conspicuous. The locations that best meet these requirements are not now available. Probably the most satisfactory to-day is one of the Alby Street corners on the south side of Second Street—or, if practicable, a site to be obtained by vacating Easton Street south from Second, so much land being purchased on either side of the street as might be needed to allow the building to stand alone, and to give room for at least a walk descending to Front Street on each side of the structure. In either case, the south side of Second Street is chosen in preference to the north because of the wish to add a jail to the rear of the building. Such location will put the jail out of sight, facing it on the railroad where it will do the least harm. The property on the Alby Street corners is very poorly improved, and therefore should not be expensive. The closing of the block of Easton Street, if that be chosen, would provide half or more of the site without any purchase, and would not prove a serious inconvenience, especially if footways were carried around the building, as vehicles cannot now get through to Third. Moreover, the proposed improvement of Court Square would



SIDEWALK VISTA ON DELAWARE AVENUE, BUFFALO,
A street that has perhaps fifty times the vehicle traffic of Alby Street in Alton.



A RAINY DAY PICTURE OF A BAD CORNER.

give to a City Hall on the latter site a pleasing outlook and interesting setting. Either location would be much quieter than that now occupied and not less central. In fact, situation on a growingly important business street would make the structure even more accessible than it is to-day. Of course a more striking site would be on the Easton Street terrace above Court Square; but this would be less convenient.

HOUSING CONDITIONS.

It is impossible to close this Report on the advancement of Alton, without a word as to housing conditions. Since my visit, my attention has been called to an item in the "Daily Times" recounting the birth of a child "in a hen house" in Alton. The writer of the article described "the room" as "just as the chickens left it. Not a bit of paper on the walls, no window, nor has the rubbish outside been cleared away." He added the somewhat obvious comment that "Alton badly needs clean, comfortable, two and three room houses." Remarking, then, on the unsanitary, to say nothing of the unsightly, condition of many small houses, he asked, "What kind of citizens can we hope to have under such environment?" What kind, indeed?

Such a condition as described, and such as I personally saw in many parts of town, is absolutely disgraceful in a city the size of Alton, because it is inexcusable. The city needs, more than it needs most other things, a first class housing law. It is possible to find many suggestive examples, as in the code recently adopted in Columbus, Ohio, as the Indiana Act, and as the 1913 Act of New York State (Chapter 774) on "the housing of people in cities of the second class." Helpful data can be obtained from the National Housing Association. The time to secure legislation of such purpose is now, when there is no strongly organized opposition and when public opinion is generally favorable.

It should be realized that housing strikes at fundamentals, affecting not merely the looks of the city and the happiness of the people—important as those things are—but morality, health, efficiency and citizenship. Nor does the influence of bad housing stop with the family housed. Each case of it is a disease center. It cannot be isolated; and its widening rings of influence extend throughout the community. Alton can never be the city it might be, and should be, while hundreds of its citizens are housed as they are to-day.

CONCLUSION.

If I seem to have found many things to criticise in Alton, it must not be thought that I have lacked appreciation of the city's many good points:—Its picturesque site, so wonderfully rich in natural beauty; its bright industrial future; the city planning leadership it

has taken, in its segregation of the industrial section; the topographical conditions which so naturally differentiate business and residence sections; its splendid park opportunities, and, best of all, the alert, forward-looking spirit, which has made even a Board of Trade ready to hear unpleasant facts if so the advancement of the city may be secured. It is because Alton has so plainly the making of a beautiful, livable, efficient city, and is so clearly on the threshold of opportunity, that it is worth while to point out every untoward thing that stands in the way of its progress.

In conclusion, I would plead especially, then, for a more general acceptance of the community viewpoint. It is a fault of our old municipal system that it emphasizes ward divisions and encourages neighborhood loyalty at the expense of city progress. Among united citizens working together for a better city, there should be no north or south, no upper or lower, no east or west. For this reason, I am sorry to observe that ward lines are maintained in the Vigilant Improvement Association. It would be better, I believe, to define the committees by purpose than by arbitrary political boundaries. Again, the line that marks the city limits illustrates, with its strange irregularity, a willingness to let neighborhood conditions and temporary expediency outweigh that broader outlook and community point of view which would surely seek earnestly to control territory that is already bounded on three sides by the city.

In taking such a viewpoint, and attempting to regard the good of all the citizens, in whatever part of town they live, the Board of Trade seems to have offered a notable example. To emphasize that, and urge it as an essential to city planning, must be one of the chief purposes of the present Report.

I have great faith in Alton; and a belief that it will rise nobly to the large tasks before it.

Respectfully submitted,

CHARLES MULFORD ROBINSON,

January 12, 1914.

Rochester, N. Y.

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ILLINOIS ROOM
NOT FOR CIRCULATION

